

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

- 1-2. (cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended)The assembly of claim ~~1~~ 23, wherein the blade is received in a groove in the protruding portion of the bar.
4. (Currently Amended)The assembly of claim ~~2~~ 23, wherein the spring comprises a tapered, coiled spring.
5. (Currently Amended)The assembly of claim ~~3~~ 23 , wherein the bar is bent and the groove is approximately parallel to the longitudinal axis.
- 6-9. (cancelled)
10. (Currently Amended)The assembly of claim ~~6~~ 24, wherein the bore is sized and shaped to permit the bar to move laterally along one axis orthogonal to the longitudinal axis.
11. (Currently Amended)The assembly of claim ~~6-24~~, wherein the bore has a generally oval cross-sectional shape so that the bar can move laterally within the bore along one axis orthogonal to the longitudinal axis.
12. (Currently Amended)The assembly of claim ~~1~~ 23, wherein the bar is coupled to an actuator for urging the protruding portion of the bar out of the handle assembly for removing the blade from the bar or mounting the blade on the bar.

13. (Original) The assembly of claim 12, wherein the actuator is a button attached to a rod attached to the bar.

14. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 13, wherein the rod has two ends and the bar attaches to one end and the button attaches to the other end.

15. (Currently Amended) The assembly of claim ~~1~~ 23, wherein the handle body further comprises:

- (a) a handle grip,
- (b) a collet having a proximal end, and
- (c) a collet core.

16. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 15, wherein the handle grip has a generally oval cross-sectional shape.

17. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 15, wherein the handle grip further comprises ribs.

18. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 15, wherein the collet flares at its proximal end.

19. (Currently Amended) The assembly of claim ~~1~~ 23, further comprising a retainer for capturing a rod within the handle body.

20. (Original) The assembly of claim 19, wherein the retainer is attached to the handle body with mating threads.

21-22. (cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) A handle assembly for a detachable scalpel blade having a keyed slot, the handle assembly comprising:

- (a) a handle body having a longitudinal axis,
 - (b) protruding from the handle body a blade bar having a tang for insertion in the keyed slot,
 - (c) a spring for urging the distal end of the blade bar into the handle body,
- and
- (d) a collet.

24. (Original) The assembly of claim 23, wherein the collet further comprises a through bore within which the blade bar is positioned.

25. (Original) The assembly of claim 24, wherein the collet further comprises a slot.

26. (Original) The assembly of claim 25, wherein the collet further comprises at least one face sloping toward the slot.

27. (Original) The assembly of claim 26, wherein the at least one sloping face guides the blade end into the slot thereby preventing the blade from disengaging from the heel.

28. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 23, wherein the tang is defined by a groove and a heel.

29. (Currently Amended) A handle assembly for a detachable scalpel blade having a keyed slot, the handle assembly comprising:

- (a) a handle body having a longitudinal axis,
- (b) a blade bar having a portion protruding from the handle body for engaging the blade and urging the distal end of the blade into engagement with the handle body, and
- (c) a collet having a through bore within which the blade bar is disposed.

30. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 29, wherein the blade is received in a groove in the protruding portion of the bar.

31. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 30, wherein the bar is bent and the groove is approximately parallel to the longitudinal axis.

32. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 29, wherein the collet has a slit within which an end of the blade is received.

33. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 29, wherein the collet has at least one sloping face for guiding the blade into the slit.

34. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 29, wherein the collet has a pair of faces sloping toward the slit for guiding the blade end into the slit.

35. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 29, wherein the bore is sized and shaped to permit the bar to move laterally along one axis orthogonal to the longitudinal axis.

36. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 29, wherein the bore has a generally oval cross-sectional shape so that the bar can move laterally within the bore along one axis orthogonal to the longitudinal axis.

37. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 29, wherein the bar is coupled to an actuator for urging the protruding portion of the bar out of the handle assembly for removing the blade from the bar or mounting the blade on the bar.

38. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 37, wherein the actuator is a button attached to a rod attached to the bar.

39. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 38, wherein the rod has two ends and the bar attaches to one end and the button attaches to the other end.

40. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 29, wherein the handle body further comprises:

- (a) a handle grip,
- (b) a collet having a proximal end, and
- (c) a collet core.

41. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 40, wherein the collet flares at its proximal end.

42. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 29, further comprising a retainer for capturing the rod within the handle body.

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43. (Previously Presented) The assembly of claim 42, wherein the retainer is attached to the handle body with mating threads.